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Executive Registry

The Honorable Albert C. Hall
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Intelligence)
Room 3E 282
The Pentagon

Dear Al:

Your letter of 12 September 1972 concerning the COINS system was most timely and I agree that a review of the total interagency information handling problem is needed. Since the dominant part of the system is operated and funded by the Department of Defense, as you point out in your letter, I believe that it would be appropriate for your office to conduct the review. The Department of State and CIA also have an interest both in the system and the product, and for this reason I believe your office should conduct this review under the general auspices of the Intelligence Resources Advisory Committee.

The fact that COINS is now an operating system which carries certain files that are of varying degrees of usefulness to users in the community is recognized. The push behind COINS up to the present time has come, however, from the technical system developers and a thorough evaluation of the usefulness of the system from the standpoint of the people who need and use the data has not been conducted. The Information Handling Committee of USIB has delayed such an evaluation because technical deficiencies in the system have made such an evaluation too difficult but COINS has now reached a stage of development where such an evaluation should be practical. It is hoped that your review will focus on this problem of user requirements. To put this another way, I would suggest your panel be composed at least as much of consumers as systems developers.

Present and soon to be operational collection systems for both SIGINT and photography will place additional requirements on the community for information network development. As you are aware,

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studies are now under way in both of these areas which should give us a better understanding of what these requirements are. The review should draw from and complement these two studies.

Bronson Tweedy's office has available to it some funds allocated by OMB "for expenses related to development of an agreed interagency plan for a computer-based information exchange system to be implemented in 1974 and subsequent years." Your review of COINS and "the broader questions of the extent of operation of such a system before we consider fully the question of implementation" would certainly be an appropriate charge against these funds, if you should require them.

CIA will, of course, provide a representative to your review group. In addition I have asked Bronson to be in close touch with you on this matter and to provide you with information you may require from the Information Handling Committee or other community organizations. I also have asked him to work out with you arrangements for IRAC participation at the appropriate time.

Sincerely,

Richard Helms

Richard Helms

IC:RT:dm (20 Sep 72)

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Note to DCI: As you can see, we are suggesting Hall do the job--under IRAC. I feel perfectly satisfied to have it handled this way, if you agree.

Bronson Tweedy

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